

Vitthatabala Sutta

Seven Strengths (Powers)

The Buddha by his supreme wisdom analyzed and discovered the path of liberation. Then during his forty-five years of life as the Buddha, he kindly explained the path of liberation to the world. As much as someone listens to the Buddha's message understands how to overcome suffering. There is a gradual order in Buddhist teachings. According to Buddhism, the main reason that decides getting rid of suffering and achieve happiness is wisdom or right understanding about our life and the world as it is.

The very first level of wisdom is the understanding of the Karmic law. It means whatever we do with intention has same results. If someone does something physically, verbally or mentally with wicked mind, he will receive evil results because of polluted mind. In the same way, if someone does something with pure mind, he will receive fruitful results because of pure mind. If anyone has this understanding he always efforts to overcome evil thoughts and tries to practice positive thoughts as much as he can in the name of happiness. Here the Buddha points out the heavenly path (*Saggamagga*). By practicing generosity, morality and meditation we are able to open the door of a blissful life. Second level of wisdom is the understanding of the dependent origination. Here explaining the impermanence of the five aggregates the Buddha points out the path of liberation (*Mokkhamagga*) where how to overcome suffering completely.

In the first step, the Buddha explains the path of heaven that how to obtain a safe after life and not to fall down to hell. Here practicing three meritorious deeds are emphasized in Buddhism. Those are practicing generosity, virtue and meditation. Doing merits is like decorating our life. As the result of practicing merits, we can improve health, good complexion, longevity and finally happiness. And practicing merits benefits to reduce evil Karmic results those we have done before. Also, those who practiced merits can be happy thinking about his good karmas at end of the life (*Punnam sukham jivita samkhamhi*).

The second step of intelligence is the understanding of cause and effect (*Paticca-samuppāda*), the dependent origination. This is the main teaching or the unique teaching in Buddhism. We get experience through our senses such as eyes, ears, nose... When we see, hear or smell something, it means five aggregates (Forms, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness) arise together and cease at the moment. When reasons (conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. The main reason of suffering is unknowing of the arising the five aggregates. All sufferings can be included in these five aggregates. That is why Buddhism says; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering" (*Samkittenapancupādānakkhandā dukkhā - සංඛිත්තේන පඤ්චුපදානක්ඛන්ධා දුක්ඛා*). The highest intelligence in Buddhism is the intelligence of the five aggregates that "Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence, being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence" (*Ahutvā Sambhutam Hutvā na Bhavissati - අහුත්වා සම්භුතං භුත්වා න භවිස්සති*). If we can understand this ultimate truth of the five aggregates practicing insight meditation which is the only way get rid of suffering. Then we live completely in the present moment seeing arising and ceasing our experiences.

Arising and ceasing of all experiences in our life is the world reality according to the ultimate truth whether we like or not, and whether we know or not. Unknowing (or ignorance) of cause and effect is the main cause of suffering. If somebody has this knowledge, he tries to overcome suffering practicing the Buddha's message. He may find the path to this goal. The path of purification is the Noble Eightfold Path. For the real happiness and getting rid of suffering this is the only path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is;

Right Understanding	(<i>Sammā Ditthi</i>)
Right Intentions/Thoughts	(<i>Sammā samkappa</i>)
Right Speech	(<i>Sammā Vācā</i>)
Right Action	(<i>Sammā kammantha</i>)
Right Livelihood	(<i>Sammā ājiva</i>)
Right Effort	(<i>Sammā Vāyāma</i>)
Right Mindfulness	(<i>Sammā sathi</i>)
Right Concentration	(<i>Sammā samādhi</i>)

As the result of listening to this path seven qualities on the path of liberation gradually increase. According to the discourse of Vitthatasattabala those qualities are named as powers or strengths. They are;

“Sattimāni, bhikkhave, balāni. Katamāni satta? Saddhābalaṃ, vīriyabalaṃ, hirībalaṃ, ottappabalaṃ, satibalaṃ, samādhibalaṃ, paññābalaṃ.

The power of confidence, effort, shame, remorse, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

1. 'Saddhā' = Confidence in the Buddha's enlightenment.

'Saddhā' means the faith or confidence that a person has about the supreme Buddha, his teachings and his noble disciples. Actually, this is not a blind faith, it is the confidence that he gains by understanding the qualities of the Buddha, his teachings and his noble disciples. As much as an intelligent person consciously listens to the Buddha's message consisting of the dependent origination, his confidence about the triple gem increases gradually. His mind is always filled with qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

2. 'Viriya' = Energy to go forward on the path of liberation.

'Viriya' means the energy to decrease evil or unwholesomeness and to develop goodness or wholesomeness. As a result of the knowledge of the world reality that is the karmic force and the dependent origination, the intelligent person is ready to practice the path that leads to real happiness. Then he doesn't like to suffer further. As his faith in the triple gem increases, he develops his courage to avoid unwholesome deeds and develop wholesome deeds.

3. '*Hiri*' = shame of doing evils.

Hiri means shame to do evils. The noble disciple abides with shame, shameful of bodily misconduct verbal misconduct and mental misconduct is shameful of demeritorious things.

4. '*Ottappa*' = Fear of committing sin

Ottappa means fear or remorse to do evils. The noble disciple abides with remorse or shame for bodily, verbal and mental misconduct and with remorse for demeritorious things.

5. '*Sathi*' = mindfulness

'Sathi' means mindfulness or awareness. With faith and energy, the intelligent person tries to live every moment mindfully. Mindfulness is also divided into four categories as 1.the contemplation of body, 2.the contemplation of feelings, 3.the contemplation of mind, 4.the contemplation of mental conditions. According to '*Mahā Satipattāna Sutta*', all our activities, thoughts, feelings and mental conditions can be included in mindfulness. If we are in right mindfulness, it means we are on the path of purification and we are on the path leading to the cessation of suffering. As the result of practicing mindfulness, the noble disciple abides endowed with the highest carefulness in mindfulness calling to mind and recalling things told and uttered long ago.

6. '*Samādhi*' = tranquility

'Samādhi' means tranquility or concentration of mind. As the result of practicing our mind on a particular technique such as, loving kindness meditation, we can purify our mind from defilements like greed and hatred. Then our mind is like a pure, steady, calm water-well. That pure mind can gain happiness and it causes to discover and see world reality with wisdom. Mindfulness is the foundation of tranquility. The wisdom depends on concentration. When mind is concentrated, the world reality is realized as it is. Wisdom and concentration are interrelated and help each other.

7. '*Pannā*' = wisdom

'Pannā' means wisdom. The wisdom that comes in Buddhism is focused on understanding of the dependent origination (or the cause and effect). It means the experience that we have through our senses arising and ceasing at the same moment. Nothing comes to the present from the past and nothing goes to the future from the present. This is the only way to get rid of all suffering. That means we are on the way to happiness. If we can practice these five spiritual faculties always, then every moment we are reaching for liberation from suffering every moment. This is the way to attain a life with fresh perspectives.

As the result of listening to the Dhamma, practicing dhamma and seeing its results above seven factors become powers in our life. Those powers benefit to overcome suffering and achieve real happiness that no one can steal.

*Saddhābalaṃ vīriyañca, hirī ottappiyaṃ balaṃ;
 Satibalaṃ samādhi ca, paññā ve sattamaṃ balaṃ;
 Etehi balavā bhikkhu, sukhaṃ jīvati paṇḍito.*

*Yoniso vicine dhammaṃ, paññāyatthaṃ vipassati;
 Pajjotasseva nibbānaṃ, vimokkho hoti cetaso”ti.*

May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!

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